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ABSTRACT

This paper presents general information about Title I of the Elementary Secondary Education Act on the education of the disadvantaged pertinent to local school districts. From the beginning, the major portion of the Title I program was intended to supplement the education routine provided by local school districts for disadvantaged children. Each school can shape its Title I project in whatever way it feels necessary to meet the specific needs of the children in its classrooms -- provided that it meets the requirements of the law. In the beginning, Title I tried to provide everything to everyone, but with time the program has become more selective. Today, assistance is focused mainly on instructional services. About 90 percent of the nation's school districts participate in the basic Title I program, with about 15,000 school districts receiving Title I funds. One problem in making an objective assessment of Title I effectiveness has been in inequitable distribution of local and State funds in many school districts. Also in the early days of the program, testing was unsystematic, and few resources were available for evaluation. Today, a uniform evaluation reporting system is being developed, as well as improved Title I evaluation models. Reports indicate that the Title I child is achieving better in school. The program has raised the mathematics and reading scores of hundreds of disadvantaged youngsters across the nation. (Author/AM)

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EDUCATION OF THE DISADVANTAGED
(LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS)

There are 16 million children in this country whose parents live at the poverty level. Almost all need special help in school to raise their skills to those of their peers. The child of poverty cannot compete in the classroom with other children. He has a different style of speech, and in some cases, speaks a language other than English. Adequate health care has frequently been denied him, and he may suffer from the lack of proper nutrition. His models for success may be totally unrelated to success in school.

TITLE I, ESEA

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 brought much needed help and attention to these children. In its first year, this legislation provided more than $900 million "to expand and improve educational programs which contribute particulary to meeting the special educational needs of educationally deprived children."

Most of this money went to local school districts, but funds also were designated for the State administration of the program and for the education of Indian children and the neglected and delinquent. Later, the handicapped and children of migratory farm workers and migratory fishermen also were to benefit.

With dramatic suddenness, the disadvantaged became the prime focus of the Nation's largest Federal aid-to-education program. The program not only received the most money but it was prominently listed first in the new legislation. It became Title I of ESEA.

From the very beginning, the major portion of the Title I program was intended to supplement, for disadvantaged children, the education routinely provided by local school districts. It offered the extra services so badly needed by these children to put them on a par with their peers and successfully carry them through their educational careers. Each school could shape its Title I project in whatever way it felt necessary to meet the specific needs of the children in its classrooms--provided, of course, that it met the requirements of the law.

UD 016 236

THE BASIC PROGRAM FOR LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES

Title I was--and is--a supplemental educational program. Many of the projects focused on reading, math, and the language arts, providing special instruction, special teachers, special equipment, and paraprofessionals. They brought parents into the classroom. And if a child couldn't see or hear well--and help was not available elsewhere--he was provided eyeglasses or a hearing aid. If he didn't have boots or a coat to wear to school, these were provided. So were breakfasts, snacks, and lunches--because it's hard to keep your mind on your books when you are hungry.

In the beginning, Title I tried to provide everything to everyone. But there wasn't enough money to do this. So the program became more selective. Today, the help is focused mainly on instructional services. State and local organizations and civic groups are picking up most of the tab for medical and dental expenses. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's School Lunch Program covers most of the food service costs, and welfare funds take care of the clothing. Parents have always been involved in the program. One of the earliest guidelines urges schools to involve parents and other members of the community, and the Education Amendments of 1974 specify that Title I school districts must establish advisory councils with parents as the majority membership for each school within the district and for the district as a whole. Today, close to half a million parents help plan the Title I projects in which their children participate.

THE EXPENDITURE

About 90 percent of the Nation's school districts participate in the basic Title I program. Initially, these totaled about 16,000. But as the number of school districts declined, so too did the number of those which participated. Today, about 15,000 school districts receive Title I funds.

Similarly, the number of participants within these districts decreased. In the early days of the program, the Office of Education sought to involve as many children as possible. But even in its first year, it was able to reach only about half of those who needed help. And it was soon apparent, Title I wasn't helping even these adequately. The money was being spread too thinly among too many. School districts were encouraged to sacrifice numbers in favor of intensified services. The number of participating youngsters decreased gradually over the years until today a little less than half of those eligible are involved in Title I programs.

Fiscal Year	Allocation to Local School Districts	Estimated Participating Youngsters
1966	$ 930,547,894	8,300,000
1967	1,015,252,657	9,100,000
1968	1,100,287,599	7,900,000
1969	1,020,438,980	7,900,000
1970	1,219,165,528	7,900,000
1971	1,339,660,962	6,700,000
1972	1,406,513,617	6,600,000
1973	1,535,537,145	6,700,000
1974	1,446,152,668	6,700,000
1975	1,587,168,967	5,600,000
1976	1,625,412,679	4,725,000

The money goes to State departments of education which, in turn, distribute it among local school districts. The Office of Education, however, determines how much money each county will receive. This calculation is based upon a complex formula which takes into account the number of poor children and the amount spent on education. The formula has been revised by Congress several times in the past 10 years.

THE RESULTS

How much difference have these dollars made? That still remains a question.

One problem in making an objective assessment of Title I effectiveness has been in inequitable distribution of local and State funds in many school districts. Federal funds frequently had to be used to bring the Title I schools up to par with others in the district. And sometimes even this was not enough.

In 1970, Congress acted to remedy this situation. Public Law 91-230 specifically stated that school districts must use State and local funds to provide Title I schools with educational services comparable to services in non-Title I schools. Title I money added to these other moneys offers a big plus to the children of the disadvantaged.

Also in the early days of the program, testing was unsystematic, and few resources were available for evaluation. Today, a uniform evaluation reporting system is being developed as well as improved Title I evaluation models. It is hoped that such models will help State and local education agencies provide more comparable data so that Title I achievement can be measured more accurately on a nationwide basis.

THE WAY IT IS

Title I has come a long way since 1965. It no longer tries to give a little something to everybody. Today more than ever before, Title I funds are channelled to schools with high concentrations of children from low-income families and the program's attention is focused on the basic skills of these youngsters. Reading and math are the prime subjects in most projects. After all, that was the original intent of Title I--to raise the child's level of achievement to a level appropriate for his age.

The average grade school youngster achieves 1-month gain for 1 month of instruction--in a year he has moved ahead 1 grade level. The typical child of poverty, on the other hand, advances at 0.7 of a month for 1-month of instruction and each year falls farther and farther behind.

Title I seeks to raise the achievement level of the poor child to at least that of the average child and even higher if it can. The first requirement in planning a Title I program is to conduct a needs assessment and then to focus on where the need is greatest. Writing performance objectives and implementing the program are the next steps, followed by an objective evaluation.

Thirty-four States now have verifiable achievement data for either reading or math. Of these, six States show mean gains of a month per month in one or both of these subjects. Sixteen other States show substantial numbers of children (32 to 98 percent) with gains of a month for a month, indicating that the traditional "backsliding" of disadvantaged children has ended for these participants.

THE GOOD THINGS THAT HAPPENED

The Title I child is achieving better in school. The program has raised the math and reading scores of hundreds of disadvantaged youngsters across the Nation. Here's what has happened in--

. Sylacauga, Alabama - In 9 months, 338 Title I first through eighth graders improved their reading skills from 1.2 to 2.5 grade levels.

. Newport Beach, California - During one school year, 285 children in grades 4 through 8 achieved a mean gain of 1.8 to 2.1 grades in language arts and 1.6 to 3.2 in math.

. Linden, New Jersey - Approximately 75 kindergarten children who received small group and individual instruction averaged 2 months per month gain in reading readiness.

. Highland Park, Michigan - A high intensity tutoring program resulted in an average reading gain of 1.9 grade levels for 129 sixth graders. Their tutors--77 seventh and 197 eighth graders--achieved 1.3 and 1 grade level on the average. In math, 102 sixth graders showed average gains of 1.8 grade levels and 146 seventh graders improved 1.7 grades.

. Pender County, North Carolina - Forty-five minutes of extra lab work in reading each day, plus reading reinforcement by other teachers, helped 640 rural children in grades 2 through 12 double--even triple--their reading achievement during a single school year. Specifically, students in grades 2 through 8 averaged 2.6 months improvement for every month of instruction; those in grades 9 through 12 averaged 3.2 months.

A BRIGHTER FUTURE

In the 10 years between 1965 and 1975 the Title I program has undergone significant changes. It has tightened its control and sharpened its focus.

Teams of education specialists provide technical assistance to State and local agencies, offering suggestions on how to better manage their programs and improve their projects. Federal auditors look for unauthorized expenditures and unauthorized practices and participation, and offer suggestions for improved management.

In the classroom, Title I encourages a direct approach to the education of the disadvantaged. Many Title I projects have as their objective "a mean gain of 1 month for each month of Title I services as measured by a standardized test."

If the Title I child can match his classmates in educational achievement, he will be able to compete with his peers for a job. He will be able to earn a decent living and adequately support himself and his family.

This, after all, is what Title I is all about.

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